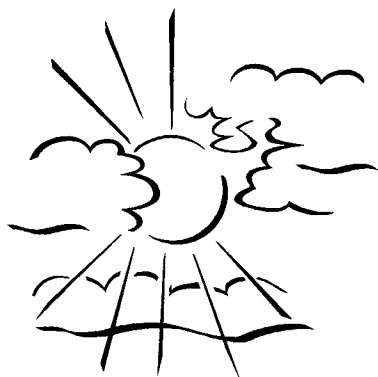


***Department
of
Human
Services***

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
*Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-8
Health Care	9-11
Immigration	12-16
Minimum Wage	17-19
Domestic Violence	20
Homelessness	21
Food Assistance	22-23
Unemployment	24
Child Day Care	25-26

*Important story at this spot

Cox looks at request for Ricky's files

[From the Lansing State Journal]

Local news briefs

Published March 28, 2006

Attorney General Mike Cox is reviewing a request made by two state representatives seeking confidential case files related to Ricky Holland.

They say the records could show how the system failed the 7-year-old Williamston boy.

"We are looking at that request, but I don't know when a ruling will be made," said Nate Bailey, spokesman for the attorney general's office.

Reps. David Law, R-Commerce Township, and Rick Baxter, R-Concord, asked for Cox to make a ruling after the state's children's ombudsman refused their request for records.

Verlie Ruffin, the state's children's ombudsman, has declined to turn over the case files, saying Michigan laws prevent her from releasing them.

Ricky's adoptive parents, Tim and Lisa Holland have been charged with his murder and child abuse. A preliminary hearing, which will determine if the murder case against them goes to trial, continues at 9 a.m. today in the 55th District Court.

Michigan Report

March 27, 2006

CHILD PROTECTION CHAIR ASKS FOR CASE FILES

Rep. David Law (R-Commerce Twp.), chair of a Special Committee on Child Protection has asked the Office of Children's Ombudsman to provide the panel with case files on the Ricky Holland, the 7-year-old found dead last summer.

Mr. Law said the ombudsman's office has said it cannot release the case files but can give panel members information on Ricky's case via a full report. Republican lawmakers may ask Attorney General Mike Cox to rule on whether the case files should be disclosed to the committee under Arianna's Law, which was approved in January 2005 and allows for the Legislature to view case files from the children's ombudsman that were previously shielded due to privacy concerns.

Gongwer News Service could not reach ombudsman Verlie Ruffin for comment Monday, but the Associated Press reported Sunday that Ms. Ruffin said Arianna's Law does not allow for the panel to view direct case files but the office can give out information through a report, which she intends to do.

Mr. Law said the special committee might meet as early as Thursday to hear Ms. Ruffin's report, but that final details of scheduling that meeting are still being worked out. Should the panel not meet before the legislative spring break, Mr. Law said a meeting would be called immediately after lawmakers return from the two-week hiatus.

Camera-Shy Ombudsman On Holland

MIRS, Monday, March 27, 2006

The state Children's Ombudsman declined to be interviewed on camera Monday to explain why she rejected the request of two GOP lawmakers seeking more details on the state's role in the Ricky **HOLLAND** case.

Valerie **RUFFIN** did step out of her office long enough to explain that she was meeting at the very moment with members of the state Attorney General's staff on the Holland matter. She even declined to have a picture taken for the evening news without any sound.

Rep. David **LAW** (R-Commerce Twp.) and Rep. Rick **BAXTER** (R-Hanover) want more details on the case, but Ruffin has declined the request. The two GOP legislators want the A.G. to determine if she can legally do that.

Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** did talk about the case on Monday and reassured the legislators that the information would be out "very soon." She said the ombudsman was obviously consulting with her lawyers on what she could or could not release.

Granholm said, just like the lawmakers, she wants to get to the bottom of the Holland matter so that if mistakes were made they can be corrected in the future.

*(Contributed by Senior Capital Correspondent Tim **SKUBICK**.)*

Priorities: Child protection efforts shrank as pols spent on themselves

A Lansing State Journal Editorial

Published March 28, 2006

A Michigan House committee is gearing up for a political brawl over state files in the Ricky Holland case. Lawmakers say they are entitled to more information from the state's children's ombudsman to perform their legal duties.

Perhaps so. But why don't lawmakers focus on the prime area of their child protection duties: ensuring Michigan has the resources to keep children safe?

In the wake of 7-year-old Ricky's death, Michigan residents have learned about the state's overstretched child protection staff. The state has learned Gov. Jennifer Granholm this year has asked for more protective workers. And the state has learned Granholm had not asked for more workers prior to this year's budget.

Neither Granholm nor the Legislature can claim to have met their duties with that record.

But it gets worse.

Child advocates cited by a Booth Newspapers report this week detail how program after program has suffered under the budgetary knife. Spending on "key" programs has dropped by \$15 million in recent years, while caseloads have increased.

This trend, say the advocates, has left child guardians with a horrendous choice: Focus limited resources on the worst cases, in the knowledge that marginal cases won't get proper attention.

It is hard to imagine that, if asked, the people of Michigan would have voted for this policy: doing less for the children of Michigan.

But it gets worse.

During the same period that child protection programs were struggling, the Michigan Legislature and governor's office have teamed up to protect some spending - on themselves.

Both the Legislature and governor's office got budget increases in the current year's budget. The Detroit News reports that since 2000, spending on the Legislature is up. The increase is less than 1 percent, but that's a far cry from the cutting other state programs have seen.

We suggest Gov. Jennifer Granholm (salary: \$177,000), Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (salary: \$105,650), House Speaker Craig DeRoche (salary: \$106,650) and the rest of the Legislature (salary: \$79,650 per member) ask their constituents a question:

Do you want us to spend more on our personal staffs and perks, or more on protecting the children of Michigan?

And, just once lawmakers, actually act on what the people tell you.

Not-guilty pleas entered for suspect in porno case

POLICE BLOTTER

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Tuesday, March 28, 2006

By Kim Crawford
kcrawford@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6242

A Thetford Township man charged in an Internet child pornography case stood silently in U.S. District Court in Flint, and not-guilty pleas were entered for him Monday.

A preliminary hearing had been scheduled for Alan E. Sain, 28, on a charge of using a computer to distribute child pornography. That hearing was to have taken place before Magistrate Wallace Capel Jr.

But since that hearing was scheduled early last week, Sain was indicted by a federal grand jury in Detroit on two other related charges. The most serious is the allegation that he enticed, coerced and used a child to engage in sexually explicit conduct and produce pictures of the acts, a charge punishable by up to 30 years in prison.

Sain was also indicted last week on a charge of possessing child porn, punishable up to 10 years. U.S. Attorney Stephan Murphy used the example of Sain's case last Thursday as he unveiled a new initiative to crack down on Internet child porn.

Detroit News

March 28, 2006

Addison Township

Man held on bond in child sex abuse case

An Addison Township man is being held on \$2 million bond after he was charged with forcing a 6-year-old boy to perform oral sex on him. David Torto was arrested Thursday after the child provided authorities with details on the alleged acts, which the boy said happened inside his residence in the Hidden Lakes mobile home park, police said. Torto, a live-in boyfriend of the boy's mother, is charged with first-degree criminal sexual conduct. His next court date is April 4.

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

Michigan expands kids' dental care Health Dept., Delta will cover more counties, but not Metro Detroit, under Medicaid program.

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

An estimated 40,000 low-income children will get better access to dental care when the state expands a public/private partnership to 59 of Michigan's 83 counties on May 1, state officials said Monday.

The \$10.9 million partnership, known as Healthy Kids Dental, currently administers Medicaid dental benefits for children in 37 counties, including Livingston, through the state Community Health Department and Delta Dental Plan of Michigan. It will expand in the Upper and Lower Peninsulas.

"It's a huge step in the right direction," said Kris Nicholoff of the Michigan Dental Association. "Gov. (Jennifer) Granholm is recognizing this is the best program in the country and oral health care is primary care."

In operation since 2000, the partnership has been hailed as a model for the nation because it reimburses dentists who care for children at rates similar to those paid through private insurance, so it increases access. Medicaid traditionally pays much lower rates, so many dentists do not accept the public health insurance for the poor and disabled, which can make it difficult for children to get dental care.

Healthy Kids Dental has resulted in a 50 percent increase in children on Medicaid utilizing their benefits in counties where the program is in place.

Most of the counties where the program is available are rural. The 22 counties being added to the program are in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula. However, critics note that the partnership will not be expanded to where the biggest demand is, including Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

"We were hoping they would expand the program to everyone across the state," said Detroit dentist Brandon Barton.

To do that would cost an estimated \$95 million, which is nearly nine times the current cost. No new money is being added to the program. Rather, all counties will be using one Delta Dental program, officials said.

You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or kkozlowski@detnews.com.

Expansion

Healthy Kids Dental expands to 22 northern Michigan counties, increasing access to 40,000 children.

Among the counties to be added:

In the Upper Peninsula: Baraga, Iron, Marquette, Menominee, Delta, Schoolcraft and Mackinac. These additions mean that all counties in the UP are part of the plan.

In the Lower Peninsula: Presque Isle, Alpena, Montmorency, Ostego, Antrim, Leelanau, Benzie, Manistee, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Ogemaw, Missaukee and Lake.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 2006
CONTACT: T.J. Bucholz
(517) 241-2112

Granholm Expands Dental Services To 40,000 More Children

Expansion Of Healthy Kids Dental Program To Cover Additional 22 Counties

Michigan Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced that a 22-county expansion of the state's Healthy Kids Dental program in the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula will ensure that 40,000 additional low-income children receive dental services.

"We are expanding health care for thousands of children by providing them with access to quality dental services," Granholm said in the joint announcement with Delta Dental and the Michigan Dental Association. "We are proud that we have been able to partner with dentists around the state to extend this critical coverage to more children."

"The expansion of Healthy Kids Dental reflects the state's commitment to improving the oral health of Medicaid-eligible children throughout Michigan," said Dr. Thomas J. Fleszar, President and Chief Executive Officer of Delta Dental. "This dynamic public-private partnership demonstrates that by working together, we can provide needed care for thousands of children and, at the same time, help them establish good oral health habits that will last a lifetime."

The partnership, which began through negotiations with Delta Dental and the Michigan Dental Association, does not require additional state funding. Dentists enrolled in Delta Dental have graciously agreed to accept the lower of two fee screens paid by Delta Dental, Granholm said.

"The 6,000 member Michigan Dental Association takes great pride in Michigan's expansion of this one-of-a-kind dental program, which serves as the best model in the entire nation," said Kris Nicholoff, Assistant Executive Director of the Michigan Dental Association.

"Governor Granholm clearly recognizes that oral health care is indeed primary care. We stand ready to continue our partnership to improve dental access in this great state."

Upper Peninsula counties included in the expansion are Baraga, Iron, Marquette, Menominee, Delta, Schoolcraft, and Mackinac. This expansion ensures that every county in the Upper Peninsula now has Healthy Kids Dental coverage.

Lower Peninsula counties included in the expansion are Presque Isle, Alpena, Montmorency, Ostego, Antrim, Leelanau, Benzie, Manistee, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Ogemaw, Missaukee, and Lake.

It is estimated that an additional 40,000 children will be eligible for dental services in the counties. In total, residents in 59 counties now have access to Healthy Kids Dental coverage. The expansion of the program will begin May 1.

In 2004, the American Dental Association named Michigan's Healthy Kids Dental program one of five national models for improving access to dental care for low-income populations.

Immigration bill roils Metro area

Thousands rally in Detroit after House OKs law criminalizing aid to illegal workers in U.S.

Jennifer Youssef / The Detroit News

March 28, 2006

DETROIT -- More than 4,000 protesters, many of them Detroit-area Latinos, crowded in front of The Detroit News building and WDIV Channel 4 television station late Monday morning to protest legislation that was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives that would make it legal to penalize people who employ undocumented immigrants.

Immigrants from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador carried flags from their homelands, held signs reading "We are not criminals," and chanted the names of their countries while speakers assailed the proposed law.

Legal residents with Latino backgrounds also showed their support at the rally, which began in Mexican Village and ended downtown.

"We need some help," said 35-year-old Ever Velasquez, who illegally came to Detroit 12 years ago from his native Guatemala and now has a work permit that allows him to legally work here delivering furniture. "The reason we stay in this country is because our (home) countries are so poor."

Velasquez of Detroit said he understands the government's gripe about illegal immigrants living and working here, but he feels the legislation is unfair to people who need help and are willing to work.

If the legislation becomes law, it would be considered a felony to help undocumented workers.

The purpose of the proposed law is to cut down on illegal workers in the United States.

Father Russ Kohler of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Detroit -- where 60 percent of the parishioners are Hispanic -- was at the protest, which he called a "pilgrimage." He says lawmakers are being unfair to a group of people who lived in North America long before Christopher Columbus ever landed on the continent.

"(Latinos) have been here for 12,000 years and 'Americans' have only been here for a few hundred years," Kohler said. "Who's the invader here?"

Kohler said he was appalled that he could be considered a felon if he were to help someone.

Esperanza Ramos, 68, and her daughter, Esther Angeles, 37, want lawmakers to turn down the legislation. Ramos was born in Texas and Angeles was born in Detroit, but their ancestors are from Mexico.

"(Immigrants) have the right to come and work here and not be treated like prisoners or killed on their way here," said Ramos, of Detroit.

You can reach Jennifer Youssef at (313) 222-2127 or jyoussef@detnews.com.

Other protests

Tens of thousands of students walked out of school in California and other states Monday, waving flags and chanting slogans in a second week of protests.

In Washington, 100 demonstrators wore handcuffs at the Capitol to protest a bill that would make it a felony to be in this country illegally and would make it a crime to aid the nation's 11 million illegal immigrants.

Senate debate

Senators broke Monday from the House's get-tough approach by refusing to make criminals of people who help illegal immigrants. The Senate Judiciary Committee adopted an amendment by Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., that would protect church and charitable groups, as well as individuals, from criminal prosecution for providing food, shelter and medical care to undocumented immigrants.

Keith Baldi
Created: 3/27/2006 4:05:14 PM
Updated: 3/28/2006 6:53:19 AM

Grand Rapids - **Thousands of protesters waving American and Mexican flags marched through Grand Rapids' streets to protest federal immigration legislation.**

The bills would make it a felony to be an undocumented immigrant.

They marched from Garfield Park to Calder Plaza to show their opposition to the legislation.

As the march moved toward Calder Plaza the crowd swelled to an estimated 7 to 10-thousand strong.

They say they're in America for a better life, a future for their children, and are working jobs no one else wants.

Gladys Martinez attended the rally, "There is a lot of immigrants working in the field, picking up apples, picking up oranges, picking up blueberries, they are the ones doing the job no one else is willing to do it."

The legislation passed by the U.S. House makes it a felony to enter the U.S. illegally or help those already here.

Jesse Allen and her friends came down today to show their support for protestors, "Our country was built on immigrants, my family was all immigrants, and I think they should be allowed to be here."

Micah Bruxvoort agrees, and opposes House Bill 4437, "I think this solution to put people in jail is going to make things worse. It's not a solution."

Gladys Martinez doesn't have the solution, but she says the immigrants coming here are not criminals and they're not terrorists, "It first started with September 11th 2001, but we never put bombs on the United States, so the reason they're making it peaceful so they know we're not pro-crime people."

According to the 2000 Census, Hispanics make up a little more than 13% of Grand Rapids, but experts say that number has grown since then and expect Latinos will replace African Americans as the largest minority group in Grand Rapids.

Wire Services Contributed to this Report
Web Editor: Chris Fleszar, Managing Editor

The Detroit News

March 28, 2006

Include guest workers in immigration reform

Make it easier for workers to fill the demand for cheap labor

Like it or not, America is not about to deport the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants living and working in this country.

For one thing, the economy would collapse. Many of the illegals are filling jobs that Americans won't do, particularly in the agriculture industry.

Others are in jobs that Americans might do, like roofing and landscaping, but not for the subpar wages that businesses are able to pay undocumented workers.

Rational immigration reform is needed to ensure that America has the entry-level workers it needs to take the unpleasant jobs that immigrants see as an opportunity, without allowing their numbers to devalue other jobs.

Unfortunately, Congress is overly focused on enforcement and not on the reality that America needs these immigrant workers. The Senate takes up debate today on the issue, following the passage of a bill in the House that deals almost entirely with better securing borders and rounding up, prosecuting and deporting those who manage to slip through, and punishing the employers who hire them.

The Senate must do better. A bill offered by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz, and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., includes an essential element the House bill leaves out -- a temporary guest worker program that would provide a path toward permanent status for those currently in the country illegally.

Those working immigrants could stay in the country by registering, paying fines for their current violations and beginning the application process for legal status. They would also be subject to security checks.

This proposal contains many features of the guest worker plan advocated by President George W. Bush, who wants workers, particularly those from Mexico, to be able to move more freely back and forth to fill seasonal and other temporary jobs.

The McCain-Kennedy proposal would also establish realistic quotas for immigration, more closely matching the number of people allowed into the country to the actual demand for immigrant labor.

Scott Cooper, a Troy immigration lawyer, says the proposal would ultimately have a greater impact on illegal immigration than tougher law enforcement.

"It takes the pressure off," he says. "It discourages illegal immigration by removing the obstacles to legal immigration."

It also forces them to pay taxes on the money they make here, and makes it easier to monitor their wages and working conditions.

Congress should include a guest worker program and more realistic quotas in any immigration legislation it moves.

Detroit News

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

Legislators sift ideas for reform including employer sponsorship, border security boost.

Lisa Hoffman / Scripps Howard News Service

A look at the main immigration fixes on the table:

Bush plan

End the "catch and release" of thousands of illegal border crossers who, because of a shortage of detention facilities, are let go if they promise to appear in court. Wants to increase number of holding facilities by 40 percent.

Create a program for "temporary workers," who would be permitted to work in the United States for no more than six years. They would not be granted amnesty but would be able to apply for a "green card" while a guest worker.

Senate plan, No. 1

The "Secure and Orderly Immigration Act" proposed by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.:

Provide three-year work visas to illegal immigrants for \$1,000, and allow the visas to be renewed once. After six years of such legal employment, immigrants would be allowed to pay another \$1,000 and apply for green cards.

Doubles penalties against employers who hire illegal workers, and mandates businesses to use an electronic system to verify employees are permitted to work.

Senate plan, No. 2

"The Comprehensive Enforcement and Immigration Reform Act" sponsored by Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Jon Kyl, R-Ariz.:

Allow illegal immigrants to work in the United States for two years, and then return home for one year. After that, they could apply to return as temporary or permanent workers.

Create a guest worker program that would allow two years of work but no chance at U.S. citizenship.

Compromise plan

Compromise proposal by Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, that was passed Monday by the panel:

Allow guest workers to be sponsored by employers for a maximum of six years, but without a route to permanent legal status.

Give immigrants who arrived before Jan. 4, 2004, the chance to obtain green cards -- but not by "cutting in line" ahead of would-be immigrants who applied legally.

Provide more training for border officers in identifying fake documents, and increasing the penalty for such fraud. Increase investigators by 12,000, add 50 immigration judges, and boost the number of beds in detention facilities by 40,000 by 2010.

Michigan Workers Will Get A Raise!

Granholm signs legislation increasing the state's minimum wage

March 28, 2006

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today signed legislation that will give hundreds of thousands of workers in Michigan a pay raise. Senate Bill 318 increases the state's minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$7.40 per hour over the next two years. The minimum wage has not been increased since 1997.

"Today is a celebration for working men and women across Michigan," Granholm said.

"This is a simple matter of fairness – anyone who puts in a fair day's work should receive a fair day's pay. Increasing the minimum wage for the first time in nine years is a critical step to ensuring that every worker receives a fair day's pay."

In her 2006 State of the State Address, Granholm pledged that workers would get the pay increase this year one way or another. The Governor said she is pleased that the Republican-led Legislature responded to the overwhelming public reaction to efforts to place this issue on the November ballot and did the right thing by approving the increase.

"The working men and women who circulated petitions and contacted their legislators should be proud that their efforts were instrumental in convincing legislative leadership to do the right thing," said Granholm.

The legislation signed by the Governor, will increase the minimum wage in three steps. On October 1, 2006, it will increase to \$6.75; then to \$7.15 on July 1, 2007; and finally to \$7.40 on July 1, 2008. With today's signing, Michigan joins more than 15 other states that have increased their minimum wage over federal standards.

Senate Bill 318 was sponsored by Senator Ray Basham (D-Taylor).

Posted on Tue, Mar. 28, 2006

Granholt plans to sign minimum wage bill Tuesday

Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. - Labor union leaders were poised to claim victory when Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed legislation to boost the minimum wage for the first time in nine years. Granholm was scheduled to sign the bill in her ceremonial office in the state Capitol on Tuesday morning, raising the minimum hourly rate to \$6.95 in October.

Michigan's minimum wage now stands at \$5.15 an hour, identical with the federal minimum wage. Seventeen states and the District of Columbia have minimum wages higher than the federal minimum.

The legislation calls for the minimum hourly rate to rise to \$7.15 an hour in July 2007 and to \$7.40 in July 2008.

The Republican-dominated state Legislature passed the minimum wage increase this month after it became evident that a petition drive to put the issue before voters was headed toward success. The Michigan Needs a Raise coalition - including labor unions, the Michigan Democratic Party and other groups - has dropped the ballot campaign and is declaring victory in the minimum wage fight.

"This year we decided to take the fight to the people," Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney said in a statement.

The coalition is not completely happy with the Michigan legislation. The ballot measure, if approved by voters, would have put the increase in the state constitution, making it harder to change.

The ballot proposal also would have raised the wage to \$6.85 an hour in January. Future increases would have been tied to the inflation rate.

The inflationary increases and the constitutional provision concerned some Republicans, who decided it would be better to pass their version of a minimum wage hike now than to see the coalition's version pass in November.

The minimum wage bill is Senate Bill 318.

ON THE NET

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

Michigan Needs a Raise: <http://www.mineedsaraise.org>

Gov. Jennifer Granholm: <http://www.michigan.gov/gov>

REPORT NO. --, VOLUME 35
Michigan Report

March 27, 2006

LABOR/DEMOCRATS CALL OFF MINIMUM WAGE DRIVE

Saying they have won the effort to boost Michigan's minimum wage, state Democratic and labor officials have suspended their drive to collect petition signatures to put a minimum wage increase into Michigan's constitution.

Governor Jennifer Granholm will sign SB 318 on Tuesday, boosting the current \$5.15 an hour minimum wage to \$6.95 an hour in September and then to \$7.15 an hour in 2007 and \$7.40 an hour in 2008.

In a surprising move earlier this month, the Legislature approved the increase after Republicans and business groups had repeatedly said boosting the minimum wage would hurt the development of jobs in the state.

Even in declaring victory, there was some grumbling. Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney called the Legislature's action, "one of the most cynical political plays ever, as the Legislative Republicans, after eight years, caved in to the will of the people and voted on the long dormant Democratic bills."

One argument supporters of continuing the petition drive had made was that by putting a minimum wage increase in the constitution, with regular cost of living increases, it would put that issue outside the realm of a possible Republican governor – should Dick DeVos win the November election – and a Republican Legislature.

In his statement, Michigan Democratic Party Chair Mark Brewer said the party would watch "to ensure that the Legislature does not weaken the minimum wage after the election. If the Legislature attempts to repeal the increase in the minimum wage after the election, as the GOP in Alaska did in 2003, we will be back on the streets with our petitions and with recall petitions as well."

Ari Adler, spokesperson for Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (R-Wyoming), said Democrats and labor made the right decision to pull the petition drive off the agenda. The initial increase in SB 381 is actually larger than what the petition drive called for, and Mr. Adler said if the voters approved the petition then minimum wage would have gone down.

Democrats had also hoped the petition drive would help drive turnout to the ballot, and asked if that would ease Republican concerns about the proposal, Mr. Adler said that "the bottom line is the minimum wage has been increased and it is best to clear up the ballot by not having this on in November."

Both Mr. Gaffney and Mr. Brewer said the Legislature only moved because of the petition drive, and Mr. Brewer said that because of that the party is planning similar proposals to go to the ballot in 2008, including a health care proposal, changes to the state's election laws and drug company immunity if there is not legislative action on the proposals.

United Press International

Domestic violence linked to child abuse

Mar. 24, 2006 at 7:07PM

Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox is seeking changes in state law to make exposing kids to domestic violence tantamount to mental or emotional abuse.

Cox wants police officers who respond to domestic violence where children are present to report incidents to Child Protective Services, even if the children were not the direct victims.

A study conducted by Cox's office of 58 child fatalities in Wayne County, Mi., over the past eight years found that 34 of the families had a history of domestic violence, the Detroit Free Press reported.

Kathy Hagenian, executive policy director for the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violation, cautioned lawmakers about linking domestic violence to the Child Protection Law, however.

Hagenian said victims of domestic violence -- often mothers of young children -- are re-victimized when Child Protective Services becomes involved. Domestic violence victims are often labeled unfit parents because they can't protect themselves or their children from a spouse or live-in partner.

Minnesota passed similar changes in child protection laws several years ago, Hagenian said, and then rescinded the laws because so many parents who were victims of domestic violence saw their children removed from their care.

Copyright © 1999 - 2006 News World Communications, Inc. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/newstrack/20060324-062411-4574r.htm>

Homeless man longed to return to family

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

By Theresa D. McClellan
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Life was hard for Antonio Garcia-Velazquez, a homeless man who lived on the streets and last week died on the freeway when he was struck by a hit-and-run driver.

He came to the United States from Cuba in 1980 and longed to return to his homeland.

"He was my fellow man, from the same country. We always had our bond that brought us together," said 41-year-old Jorge Mayea.

Mayea once lived on the street and remembers meeting Garcia-Velazquez in 1987, when he said they spent their time drinking and talking in the woods near Wealthy Street before the freeway access was developed.

Garcia-Velazquez had dreams.

"He wanted to have some money someday and go to Cuba to see his family," Mayea said. But his drinking overwhelmed his dreams, his friend said.

"At one time, he had everything as far as a place and money, but the drinking led him to homelessness," said Mayea, who added he has since stopped that life.

They last saw each other two days before witnesses said Garcia-Velazquez, 62, slowly walked across southbound U.S. 131 near Franklin Street last Wednesday without looking at the oncoming traffic and was struck by an SUV that fled the scene.

On March 22, Mayea was standing near the Mel Trotter Ministries' mission at Commerce Avenue and Williams Street enjoying a smoke when he saw Garcia-Velazquez for the last time. They nodded and Garcia-Velazquez entered the mission. But he changed his mind and returned to the streets that night. Mayea learned of his death from Mel Trotter staff.

"It shocked me. I was very surprised. One day, you're here and, the next day, you're gone."

Witnesses recalled seeing him walk across the freeway around 8:30 p.m. Wednesday. One car swerved to avoid him, but another motorist behind that car had no time to react and struck Garcia-Velazquez, said police, who are looking for a metallic gold or pewter sport utility vehicle, such as a 1995-1998 GMC Jimmy or Chevy S-10 Blazer.

It doesn't surprise Mayea that his friend walked into traffic.

"When a person is drinking, it comes a time that a person may do things he may not remember." Mayea will speak about his friend during a 7:15 p.m. Thursday funeral service at Mel Trotter, 225 Commerce Ave. SW.

Garcia-Velazquez will be buried in a donated plot. The Heritage Life Story Funeral Parlor will donate services for the funeral, and he will be buried at Oakdale Cemetery.

Rural pantry aids needy

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

JESSICA SOULE
THE SAGINAW NEWS

A rural Saginaw County church offers compassion in the form of food and clothing. Oakley Community Church gives groceries to anyone whose stretched budget doesn't allow for the necessities.

This summer, workers plan to break ground on an expansion of the church, 327 S. Main, to allow more space for the food pantry and donation center.

"Christianity isn't sitting around in a church. It's love in action," said David A. Ward, assistant pastor.

Volunteer Charlene A. Boyd praises the congregation for feeding her body and soul. Boyd, 60, is battling colon cancer and requires chemotherapy three times a week.

"They've helped me so much, not only material-wise, but I don't think I would be alive if it wasn't for them," she said.

Boyd sets out clothes and organizes food so people can choose what they take. The church doesn't limit how often recipients may pick up goods.

In contrast, the Chesaning Area Emergency Relief Center, 218 S. Church, provides a box of food every six weeks.

The couple hours of volunteering a week she can spare, between doctor appointments or when treatments haven't robbed her of energy, are her way of giving back to those who continue to help her, Boyd said.

People can pick up goods or drop off necessities from :30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the church, or call 845-4644 to arrange a different time.

The nondenominational church has 57 parishioners and up to 30 additional worshippers. The congregants provide the majority of the offerings, said Ward, 50.

In Brady Township, which encompasses the village of Oakley, there are 300 households bringing in less than \$15,000 a year, said Senior Pastor Franklin L. Ward, who is David Ward's father.

Many residents work for the auto industry, which is riddled with layoffs, cutbacks and health benefit downgrades, added Ward, 80, of Brady Township.

Like those who come to the house of worship looking for basics, Boyd also faces financial problems. She remains on medical leave from the Owosso factory Toledo Commutator Co., but her sick pay and medical insurance ran out after 60 days.

The woman tried to sign up for government assistance, but found the task daunting. The food and clothing bank is a way to provide for the needy without red tape, she said.

"God tells us to go out there and help. Go out there and show the love Jesus has for people," said Dave Ward, who lives in St. Charles.

Twenty-nine percent of the church's income goes directly to mission work, said Franklin Ward.

On a mission

Parishioners filled boxes with clothes and toys stored under a wood-frame picture of Jesus. An Elsie man took advantage of the church's aid after suffering severe burns in a trailer fire.

"He was so moved when we gave him everything that he went home and found clothes that no longer fit his (two) children and came back to give us those," said David Ward.

"He who lost everything wants to help others. That's love in action."

But meeting people coping with tragedies and struggling to overcome hurdles leaves Ward wishing he could do more, he said.

For single mother Julie L. Hoskins, the church does plenty.

The 22-year-old dug through piles for 45 minutes to find outfits for her 3-year-old, 2-year-old and 8-month-old. Hoskins, of Flint, also picked up toiletries.

Her mother, a Burton resident, heard about the site from friends in the village of 334 residents.

They made the 40-minute trip because facilities in and around Flint limit people as to how often they come and how much they get, Hoskins said, who dropped out of high school in the 11th grade when she had her first baby.

Although gasoline prices hovered at \$2.50 per gallon, she said the trip was worth the cost.

Looking ahead

Church officials are looking into teaming with a grocery store and the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan to receive commodities at discounted rates.

They also aim to expand the 118-year-old structure to create a storage room for goods, a kitchen that may one day house a soup kitchen and classrooms, said Franklin Ward.

He is not sure of the cost of the addition.

Two rows of folding tables shoulder crowded donations from church members who fill the 18 red-cushioned pews each Sunday.

Designs include a larger space to showcase donations in the future.

Church officials host a monthly Gospel Night fundraiser to benefit the food pantry on the second Saturday of the month at the Crossroads Cafe, 104 N. Main.

As for Hoskins, she plans to come back to the sanctuary until she finds other means to support herself.

"Right now I'm just looking for anything," Hoskins said, "but I want to go back to school." v

Jessica Soule is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach her at 776-9682.

U.P. jobless rate up

By LINDA LOBECK
Daily News Staff Writer

MARQUETTE — Unemployment rates continued to climb in January in the Upper Peninsula to 7.7 percent, up from 6.9 percent in December, according to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

An increase in the jobless rate was recorded in 14 out of the 15 counties in the U.P. during January. These increases ranged from 0.1 to 3.1 percentage points above the December rates. Only Gogebic County remained unchanged, noted Kathy Salow, analyst in Marquette.

"The January rate changes can be attributed to typical seasonal workforce patterns," she said.

Dickinson County's unemployment rate increased from 5.3 percent in December up to 5.8 percent in January. The rate a year ago was at 6.7 percent.

The civilian labor force for Dickinson County totaled 14,475 for January with 13,650 employed and 825 unemployed.

In Iron County, the jobless rate rose to 7.7 percent in January, up from 7.1 percent in December. The rate a year ago was at 9.6 percent.

Iron County's civilian labor force in January totaled 5,925 with 5,450 employed and 475 unemployed.

"Compared with a year ago, unemployment in the Upper Peninsula is down by 1.3 percentage points from the January 2005 jobless rate of 9 percent. Over the year, the jobless rate was lower in each of the 15 counties in the U.P. The declines ranged from 0.1 to 3 percentage points below January 2005 unemployment rates," Salow said.

Day-care home's license suspended

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

By Ken Kolker
The Grand Rapids Press

KENTWOOD -- The state suspended the license of a child day-care after the owner failed to reveal that a man in the home had been convicted of a sex-related crime.

The home of Cathy Workman, 3457 N. Meadowgrove Drive SE in the Bailey's Grove neighborhood, has been licensed since July 2003 to care for up to six children.

A man in her home was charged last year with second-degree sexual assault, a felony involving inappropriate touching of a girl in the home, according to state Department of Human Services records.

Court records identify him as Workman's husband, Donald Workman, 34, who pleaded no contest to a lesser charge of gross indecency.

The assault allegedly occurred in February 2003. The girl was not among those being cared for at the home.

The girl later recanted the allegation, but detectives said they believed she was sexually assaulted, the report states.

Donald Workman pleaded no contest in October. He pleaded so the girl wouldn't have to testify in court and so he could keep his name off the state's sex-offender registry, state records show.

Cathy Workman said she got a day-care license because she was watching her friends' children. She said she doesn't believe her husband assaulted a girl, despite his plea.

Workman told state investigators she informed parents of her four day-care children about the incident.

A probation officer said she told Cathy Workman to notify the state about the conviction, but Workman said her lawyer told her it was not required. The probation officer notified the state in January, about the time Donald Workman was sentenced to probation and fines.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

**Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or
Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394**

Michigan Department of Human Services Suspends the Family Day Care Home Certificate of Registration of Cathy Workman

March 27, 2006

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children and Adult Licensing issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the license of Kent County family day care home provider Cathy Workman, 3457 North Meadowgrove Drive SE, Kentwood, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child day care family home.

Because the February 22, 2006 complaint investigation found violations of both MCL 722.115g of the Child Care Organizations Act as well as the caregiver responsibilities administrative rule, OCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

Effective 6:00 p.m., March 27, 2006, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Cathy Workman from operating a family day care home at 3457 North Meadowgrove Drive SE, Kentwood, Michigan or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept children for care after that date and time. The order also requires Ms. Workman to inform all of the parents of children in her care that her certificate of registration has been suspended and that she can no longer provide day care.

Ms. Workman has held a certificate of registration to operate a family day care home since July 1, 2003. The certificate of registration was for six children.

Michigan law defines a day care family home "as a private home in which 1 but fewer than 7 minor children are received for care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption."

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.